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SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - NOVEMBER 7, 2008

11. (U) ELECTION BREAKFAST FOR KEY CONTACTS GENERATES WIDE
MEDIA COVERAGE:

Ambassador Bradtke hosted a post-election breakfast early on November 5 for over 300 key embassy contacts from the Croatian government, the media, academia, and the business and diplomatic communities. Despite the early start, turnout was impressive, with guests eager to discuss the final results as they came in, including in the Alaska Senate race in which Croatian-American (and Anchorage mayor) Mark Begich was the Democratic candidate. Prominent guests included Foreign Minister Jandrokovic, Zagreb Mayor Bandic, as well as assistant ministers and state secretaries, NGO leaders and academics. Featuring multiple wide screen televisions carrying the latest election news from television networks and the internet, the event took place in the ballroom of the downtown Esplanade hotel. The morning's program included a digital video conference with Dr. David Schaller, an expert on American government and the U.S. presidency at the University Maryland in Baltimore, and a video clip from Croatian National Television correspondent Anka Bilic-Keserovic, who is currently in the United States on an International Visitor elections program. With the hotel's elegant ballroom as a backdrop, the Ambassador granted both live and recorded interviews to HTV, RTL, Nova TV, Croatian Radio, Radio 101 and national daily Novi List. Other newspapers and magazines sent photographers to cover the event, with prominent next day coverage. (KWetzel)

12. (U) AMBASSADOR BRADTKE LIVE ON RADIO 101 ON ELECTION DAY:
The previous evening, Ambassador Bradtke was the featured guest on Radio 101's weekly diplomatic program on November 4, discussing the U.S. general elections, and answering a wide variety of questions from live callers on everything from campaign finance to the workings of the electoral college. Beyond the elections, the Ambassador also discussed the international financial crisis, transatlantic relations, and the security situation in Zagreb with the program's well-known host Zrinka Vrabec-Mojzes. The Ambassador has appeared on this popular hour-long radio program three times, engaging in conversation with one of Croatia's most respected journalists and connecting with Zagreb citizens in a live format. (KWetzel)

13. (U) FULBRIGHT ALUMNI HOLD PANEL ON 2008 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS:

The Croatian Fulbright Alumni Association and the Croatian-American Society organized a panel discussion on the U.S. Elections on October 30 at Zagreb University's School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Fulbright alumnus and professor of history Tvrtko Jakovina introduced the panel and showed biographies of the candidates through State's Video Acquisition Service. Ivan Grdesic, former Croatian Ambassador to the U.S., professor of political science, and two-time Fulbright alumnus; Vedrana Spajic, Fulbright Alumna and professor of comparative education; and Ivo Banac,

professor of history at Yale and Zagreb universities and President of the Croatian Helsinki Committee, gave short overviews of the candidates and issues in the 2008 U.S. elections. More than 100 senior students of history, sociology, English, political science, and a number of faculty attended this event. In a ninety-minute discussion a variety of questions were raised about the programs of the Democratic and Republican candidates on a wide range of issues: U.S. foreign policy, economy, energy, environment, terrorism, abortion, education. (RPost)

14. (U) GLAVAS AND DJAPIC, RIGHT-WING HEADLINERS, TO GO HEAD TO HEAD IN OSIJEK CITY ELECTIONS:

Branimir Glavas--currently standing trial for war crimes--announced on October 31 that he would seek his party's nomination for the mayorship of Osijek. Glavas said he was confident his trial would end in an acquittal, and that he looked forward to campaigning against Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) leader Anto Djapic. Djapic, who has not yet formally announced his candidacy, boasted in September that despite the right-wing HSP's poor showing in the November 2007 general election, the party would stage a "great comeback" in local elections. HSP leaders have been working to reorganize the party branches and promote new faces, while sidelining self-aggrandizing "false party stars," who neglected the building of local party infrastructure. The HSP hopes to maintain control in Osijek, Sisak, and Slavonski Brod, and potentially expand its position in Sibenik, but will face a potentially difficult battle with Glavas' local HDSSB party. (DMeges)

15. (U) TRADE DEFICIT GROWS AS ANALYSTS FORECAST SLOWING GDP GROWTH:

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According to preliminary data from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Croatian exports totaled HRK 52.27 billion (\$9.5 billion) in the first nine months of 2008, while imports totaled HRK 115.59 billion (\$21.0 billion). Compared to the same period in 2007, these amounts represent an 8.3 percent rise in exports, a 13.6 percent rise in imports, and an 18.4 percent increase in the trade deficit. In its October 31st Croatian Economic Outlook Quarterly, the Zagreb Institute of Economics forecasts GDP growth at 4 percent for 2008, dropping to 3.8 percent in 2009. Forecasts released by the European Commission on November 3 indicate 3.5 percent growth in GDP for 2008, falling to 3 percent in 2009. The Commission attributes the slowdown to a strong deceleration in the growth of household consumption, partly due to lower government transfers to pensioners and slowing credit growth. (DWestfall)

16. (U) DIRECTOR OF MIT LIBRARIES ADDRESSES CROATIAN ACADEMIC AND SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY CONFERENCE:

Dr. Ann Wolpert, the Director of Libraries at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), was the keynote speaker at the annual conference of the Croatian academic and scientific libraries in Zagreb. Speaking about "The Value of Academic Libraries in the 21st Century", Dr. Wolpert spoke about the international, inter-institutional and interdisciplinary aspects of the modern library, emphasizing the current convergence of instruction, publishing and information management. Dr. Wolpert provided an overview of the organization and activities of the MIT libraries, discussing cooperation with faculty in identifying research and development needs. Focused on continuing education for librarians and information professionals, the annual conference provides information on the latest trends, products, and technologies for managing information resources. Apart from the lecture at the conference, Dr. Wolpert also held a workshop for librarians entitled "Coffee with Ann" and lectured the University of Zadar. The U.S. Embassy helped sponsor her trip to Croatia. (KWetzel)

17. (U)DCM SPEAKS ABOUT THE AMERICAN DREAM TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN OSIJEK:

Deputy Chief of Mission Vivian Walker gave a lecture on the American Dream on November 3 in Osijek, the capital of the eastern Croatian region of Slavonia. Drawing on themes from U.S. history, politics, culture, and literature, the DCM discussed the concept of the American Dream with 60 students from the Drama Academy and the English Department at the University of Osijek. The speech generated questions on contemporary social issues in both the United States and Croatia. Such events are greatly appreciated at regional universities which do not receive a large number of international speakers. The Embassy has long enjoyed strong relations with the English Department at the University of Osijek, through providing Fulbright scholars and senior specialists, English Language Fellows and through book and DVD donations. (KWetzel)
Bradtke